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A
SERMON

Preach'd before the
LORD MAYOR
And Court of Aldermen,

A T
GUILD-HALL Chappel,
July the 18th, 1686.

By *JAMES FEN*, M. A.
And Vicar of *Gondhurst* in *Kent*.

L O N D O N: y
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TO THE
Right Honourable
Sir Robert Gessery,
Lord Mayor of the City of *London*,
And to the
Court of Aldermen.

Right Honourable,

THE Controversial has so
prevail'd over the Practi-
cal Divinity, that the ge-
nerality of Men are more studious to
defend an Opinion, than to live well;
and

The Epistle Dedicatory.

and please themselves more in the bare Notion of Religion, than the Practice of it. So that now serious Exhortations to Piety, and to a Religious Life, are become highly necessary.

Of this Nature is the following Discourse ; The Design whereof is, only to perswade, that Men would endeavour, by an holy Conversation, to adorn the Christian Faith, which in words they dispute up, and pretend so much Zeal for ; and that they would manifest the Reality of their Belief of another World, by their Victory over this.

That

The Epistle Dedicatory.

That God would be pleas'd, not
only to protect Ye from the Adversity
of this World, but also to enable Ye
to despise and live above its Prosperi-
ty ; as 'tis the Subject of the Sermon,
so 'tis of the Prayer of,

Right Honourable,

Your most humble,
and most obedient Servant,

JAMES FEN.

A

That God would be pleased
only to send Yehonatan
of this World, but also to send
to deliver us from the
power of the evil one
and the power of the
flesh.

A Sermon preach'd before the
Lord Mayor at *Guild-hall* Chappel.

I JOHN 5. part of the 4th Vers.

— *This is the Victory that overcometh
the World, even our Faith.*

NO sooner was our Saviour come in-
to the World, but the Devil had
his Agents ready, either totally to
stifle the belief of him, or else to
blast the Fruits of that Belief, good
Works, and a holy Conversation. Among the
latter of these were a sort of Men, who to the
profession of Christianity, join'd a Life, which
a sober Heathen would have blush'd at; for be-
ing by the Gospel freed from the burthenfome
Ceremonies of the Law, they thought they had
nothing more to do, but to give themselves over
to all manner of Licencioufness, to carry on a
free Trade, hold an open Correspondence with
the Vanities of the World, serve God and Mam-
mon too.

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They thought that an empty belief of the Joys of Heaven, would at last carry them up thither, though in the mean time they minded Earthly Things, glued their Affections to this World, and walk'd in those Ways which lead to the bottomless Pit.

To such Believers as these, who had nothing to distinguish them from Infidels but the rehearsal of their Creed, *St. John* applies himself in this Epistle, and tells them, That if they do believe that the Son of God came into the World to save Sinners; if they do believe that he has freed them from Misery, and purchased Heaven for them, they must then evidence the Truth of this Belief by their Heavenly Conversation, and by living as becometh those, who do indeed expect to be partakers of the Glorious Inheritance of the Saints in Light: Nor must they now concern themselves with the World any farther, than to look upon it as an Enemy, and to fight the good Fight of Faith against it. And to shew that this is a Thing of Weight and Moment, and to engage their utmost Strength and Policy in this Spiritual Expedition, he uses words, which imply the beating of the Brain, the stretching of the Nerves and Sinews, he
speaks

speaks of Victory and Overcoming.

This is the Victory (says he) which overcometh the World, even our Faith.

From these words we may observe ;

- I. What Faith the Gospel requires ; not a Notional or Speculative, but an Active, Practical Faith, implied in this word *Victory* ; which is a thing not to be expected without Industry and Action.
- II. Consider we the Thing conquer'd ; and that is, *the World* ; where I shall shew what is meant in this place by the World, and how Faith overcometh it.
- III. The Time when we must engage against the World ; and that is exprest in the Present Tense, *Overcometh* ; 'tis not enough that we have once opposed the World, or do design it ; but it must be our present constant endeavour, to compleat and maintain the Victory.

And lastly; I shall make some Reflections upon these Particulars, by way of Conclusion.

I begin with the First; viz. What Faith the Gospel requires; not a Notional or Speculative, but an Active, Practical Faith, implied in this word *Victory*; Victory being a Thing not to be expected without Industry and Action.

And therefore 'tis sad to consider how Men content and delude themselves with a mere Historical belief of the Gospel, without regard to the Precepts of it, and think they can go an easier way to Heaven than what Christ has appointed. They extol and cry up Faith, as if the very name of it was sufficient to carry them into *Abraham's Bosom*, but in the mean time, suffer the Obedience and Work of Faith, to lie groveling in the Dust, and trampled under Feet. For alas! what is the Faith of too many, but either a bare not denial of those Truths recorded in Scripture concerning the Son of God; or a receiving Christ only as a Saviour, without respect to him as Lord; or else a presuming upon his Mercy, to pardon the neglect of that Service, which

which they cannot but acknowledg as a most reasonable Tribute for what he has suffered and done for Sinners.

Thus instead of Humility, Patience, Temperance, Charity, Self-denial, subduing the World, &c. Men lay all their Hopes upon an idle lazy Faith, to the great prejudice and undermining of our Duties, both towards God and Man.

But if we look into Scripture, we shall meet with several places which enjoyn Piety and good Works, as Conditions of Salvation altogether as necessary and indispensable as Faith is; and if we weigh those very Texts which the *Solifidian* produces in vindication of his Justifying Faith, we shall find that they imply those Religious Actions which such a Faith obligeth to.

For can we believe that Christ was sent from God to be our Redeemer, and our Lord, and not yield that Obedience which is due to him as such, by submitting to his Will, and observing all that he has commanded us: For at the Day of Judgment, when Christ shall summon us before his Tribunal, we must be judged and sentenc'd, not only by our Belief, but by our Actions; and not the knowing of our Master,
but

but the doing of his Will, must then plead for us : And therefore our Saviour foretold the Jews, that they would come unto him at the last Day with, *Lord, Lord*, in their Mouths, boasting their Belief and Knowledg, but because he should find their Faith void of Works, he before-hand pronounc'd their Doom ; *Depart from me, ye Cursed : for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no Meat ; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no Drink : I was a Stranger, and ye took me not in : Naked, and ye clothed me not : Sick, and in Prison, and ye visited me not. Therefore depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. Mat. 25. 41, 42.*

So that having briefly put you in mind, that the true Christian Faith rests not in a bare Speculation, but proceeds to Work and Action, still breathing and reaching after Victory ; let us in the next place consider, what it is that our Faith does overcome ; and that is, *the World ; this is the Victory that overcomes the World.*

And that we may the better understand how Faith overcomes the World, let us see first how the World assaults us : It assaults us two ways, on the right hand by Prosperity, on the left by Adversity. Sometimes it draws its Forces into
open

open Field, displays its bloody Colours, marches against us with the fiery Trial of Affliction, it handles us roughly, shakes and gripes us severely: But when by its Threats, and open Hostility, it can't prevail, it retreats to its Policy, makes use of mild and gentle Stratagems, layeth an Ambush of its counterfeit Glories, and offers to give us all, if we will fall down and worship.

But Faith on the other side, withstands the World these two ways:

1. By patiently suffering its Adversity.
2. By resisting and despising its Prosperity.

So that Faith overcometh the World;

1. By patiently suffering its Adversity. Adversity is so terrible, so dreadful to those, whose Hopes are only in this World, that to avoid the stroke of it, they willingly undergo the greatest hardship; they rise up early, and sit up late; contrive and plod; labour and toyl for more gain and profit, denying themselves the enjoyment and comfort of what they already have;
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and, in contradiction to our Saviour, take too much thought for to morrow.

Nor is this Fear of Adversity, the Spring and Source of this immoderate and unchristian care only, but also of that Injustice, Oppression, Deceit, Perjury, and of all those other Vices which with worldly Men are in so great repute ; let but the least storm of Adversity begin to arise, and presently, to secure themselves, they venture upon any Sin : and if at last the Cloud does overtake and fall upon them, like forlorn Creatures, they despond ; cause their Burden to sit uneasy by impatience, and increase its weight by struggling under it : Their mean Condition, which is already miserable, they make more miserable by discontent, which turns that little Bread they have into a Stone, and their few small Fishes into Scorpions.

Nor do they stop at this, but, as the Apostle expresses it, fight against God himself, murmuring and repining at his wise Providence and Government of the World, calling his Goodness and Justice into question ; opposing their own corrupt Desires to his most Sacred Will, accounting any state of Life better than what their Heavenly Father knows to be best, and is pleased to place them in.

Thus

Thus does the World, through fear of Adversity and Impatience under it, lead unbelieving and earthly-minded Men into Captivity, and erect its Trophies over them: and no wonder it so easily subdues them, for, in the Psalmist's words, *These are the Men who took not God for their strength*, Psal. 52. 7.

And as Infidelity thus yields; so on the other side, Faith overcometh the World amidst all its Frowns and cross Events, by a serene submission to the Divine Will. Faith takes out the Sting of Adversity; sweetens its Gall and Wormwood; makes its Yoke light and easy, by having its Eye fixt upon God, whose Goodness, as at first, 'twas pleased to make us, so still delights to preserve us; whose Wisdom knows well how to order all Things to the best for them that trust in him; and whose Power would never suffer any Evil to approach us, unless for our greater Good some way or other. 'Twas this Faith instructed St. Paul, in *whatsoever state therewith to be content*, and to know how to want; as well as to abound: For he was perswaded, *That neither Sword, nor Famine, nor Pestilence, nor any other thing could separate him from the Love of God;*
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though

though he might be deform'd with Poverty, mangled with the Sword, defaced with Sickness, yet God's Love would own him in the most contemptible shape or habit; and so long as he was God's Favourite, it troubled him not though the World frown'd.

Such a Faith, such a Belief in a Deity, supported the wiser sort of Heathens in their Straits and Difficulties; who readily submitted to the Will of the Great Governour of the World, and repined at nothing that seem'd good unto him.

The many Examples of this nature, which we meet with among the Ancient Philosophers, may serve to fortify us against the greatest Adversities, and teach us not to grieve or murmur at God's dealing with us, considering we are his Creatures, and his Will the Law we must be ruled by.

This one Consideration alone, that God gave us our Being, and therefore we ought to be subject to his Government and disposal of us; is enough to engage our Patience under his afflicting Hand, who has been pleased to place us upon the Stage of this Life, chearfully and obediently

diently to act our Part, not dispute it. This is our Duty as we are Men, as we are Creatures. But then as Christians, as Believers, when we have an Eye to the Recompence of Reward in the Life to come, and begin to recollect with our selves that we were made, not only to obey God here, but to enjoy him hereafter; no affliction then can any longer seem grievous, which yields such Fruit of Righteousness to them that are exercised thereby, as St. Paul speaks in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, Heb. 12. 11.

Set before ye therefore the glorious Company of Prophets and Apostles, the noble Army of Martyrs, but above all looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our Faith; and see how all these, for the Joy that was before them, endured their Cross, and sundry kinds of Death, and are now set down upon the Throne at the right Hand of God.

When St. Paul began to meditate upon the eternal Weight of Glory, presently his Affliction was but light, 'twas then but for a moment; *Our light Affliction*, says he, *which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding, and an eternal weight of Glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

So that however rigid and severe the World may be to us novv ; unwilling to allot us any Portion here below but mournful *Golgotha*, unwilling to allow us Property in any Element besides the Waters of *Marah*; grudging us the very Air vve breath in, unless so much as may furnish us vvith Sighs ; yet let this Faith and Belief comfort us, *viz.* that there is a Life to come vvill make amends for all our Sorrows here; and vvhen vve shall once enter into the promised Land, and take possession of those vast Regions of Bliss, vve shall be for ever out of the reach of any more Storms, taking our Rest and happy Repose upon a calm and serene Eternity; vvhere vve shall have nothing more to do, but to receive Blessings, and sing Praises to the God that gives them.

And therefore vvhen the World assaults us vvith Adversity, to force us to stoop and yield, Faith on the other hand, teaches and enables us to oppose and overcome it by reasoning thus : Alas! vvhy should vve do any thing unlawful, and sin against our Conscience, to avoid Poverty, or Trouble, or what Man can do unto us? If the whole World conspire, it can make us miserable but for a time; and at last it can but take away

away our Life ; and when this is done, we shall be out of its reach for ever. The Evils of this Life can follow us no farther than the Grave ; they can never come near the Soul, to destroy the least Ingredient of its happiness : and so long as that is safe and well, we are happily provided for. But if we cast off the Fear of God, and make him our Enemy, we are undone for ever, for he can punish us everlastingly.

Away therefore all ye vain Cares and Discontents at what befalls us here ; We will not fear what the World can do unto us, but vve vvill take the surest course to secure our selves from Misery ; We vvill fear God, and set him always before us, vvho, after this transitory Life is at an end, if vve now displease him, can make us miserable for ever.

This is the first vvay vvhereby Faith overcometh the World, viz. by patiently suffering its Adversity.

2. Faith overcometh the World, by resisting and despising its Prosperity.

If we consider the things in themselves, which furnish this World for our Delight and Service, we must pronounce what once the great Creator did

did of them, *Behold, all very Good.* But alas ! by our too much admiring this Goodness, we turn it into Vanity ; and what was at first bestow'd upon us for our Comfort, through our own folly becomes vexation of Spirit : We provoke our Heavenly Father to send a Curse upon his very Blessings, whilst we pay that adoration to them, which is due only to the Giver : God has been pleas'd to become the Author of our Comforts ; he has made all things about us useful, glorious, and beautiful, to engage our Gratitude, and win our Love to himself ; but we, ungrateful and unkind, forsake the Maker, and fall in love with his Creatures ; set them up as our chief End and Happiness, which ought only to be used in way to it.

We pursue the Pleasures and Profits, court the Honours of this World, because we propound these to our selves as the greatest and highest Good.

Upon this Mistake we are so perpetually busy and restless, and so wholly taken up with the beloved Vanities here below, that Heaven, Eternity, and God himself, are seldom thought on : We study and contrive, labour and contend for this World, and care not what becomes of us in the
next,

next, so we can but thrive and prosper here.

Thus the false Beauties and Glories of the World, like Glowworms which shine in the dark, having once dazled our Eyes, we follow Shadows for the substantial Good, and stoop to the lure of every Trifle. Like perpetual Inhabitants of these lower Regions, we mind things that are only present, and live as if we had never heard of Death, or a Life to come.

Now the God of this World having blinded our Minds, and holding us fast bound in these Chains of Darkness, leads us in triumph, exercises a Domination over us, and begins to command; to command our Time, scarce allowing us a few Minutes for our Devotions: For how often are our Prayers either totally forgotten, or else wilfully laid aside upon the account of a little worldly Business, an idle Visit, or perhaps some worse Diversion. And when we do enter into our Closet, as our Saviour enjoins us, to perform our Religious Duties, the World follows and commands us there too; it commands our Thoughts, bidding them come to this sinful Object; and they come; go to that Vanity, and they go. It takes possession of the whole Soul, engages all that is Spiritual to it self, and affords us no-
thing

thing for God but bodily Service, which the Apostle tells us profiteth little : we bend indeed the Knee to God, but worship Mammon.

This is the deplorable condition of earthly-minded Men, who so eagerly covet the Things of this World, that they can relish nothing that is heavenly : they loath the Celestial Manna, the Joys of the heavenly Canaan, and will run after the Garlick, the Onions, and the Trash of Egypt.

The World has totally subdued and conquered them, uses them as its Slaves and Vassals ; exacts all their Cares, their Industry and Affections, as its proper Tribute ; and through a seeming Paradise, leads them into perpetual Bondage.

But now see how Faith obtains the Victory, and triumphs over the World, by a pious contempt of all its Glories. It looks through their Paint and Varnish, and finds them to be but of a fading, perishing Constitution, not worthy we should lavish out our Thoughts and Desires upon them.

It considers Man too, tho Lord of all below, to be but a poor mortal Creature, of a dependent Being, each moment more and more mouldring into Corruption, and hastening into his native Dust. Upon the belief and consideration of this, see what

what a Note of ignomy David sets upon the worldly Man's Prosperity, he compares it to nothing better than to a Dream, and to the Image of things; Psal. 73. 20. *As a Dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest thou shalt despise their Image.* Though these Men may think themselves truly happy; yet when Death shall stir up and awake their Soul, they will then find themselves naked and poor, and their earthly Possessions no more able to help them, or supply their Wants, than are the imaginary Riches of a Dream.

And in Psalm 39. 6. he tells us, That *Man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain: he heapeth up Riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.* As if he had said, The continual trouble Men put themselves to, in increasing their Possessions, will avail them but little in the end; for they must die, and leave what they have hoarded up to they know not who: for they are not sure what manner of Person their Heir may prove, or what may befall him, or who shall enjoy their Wealth when they are dead. And therefore 'tis in vain for Men to break their Rest, and disquiet themselves about Things of so great uncertainty; for, says the

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Psalmist,

Psalmist, He heapeth up Riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.

Agreeable is this to what our Saviour said to the covetous Man, *Luke 12. 20. Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee; and then whose shall all these things be?* Though Men may flatter themselves with Provisions for this World, and Goods laid up for many Years, and bid their Soul take its ease, yet one time or other Death will seize upon them, and strip them of all they placed their trust and delight in here.

An Instance of this we have, *Luke 16. 24.* in the Rich Man, who being in Hell, cried unto *Abraham* for a drop of Water; and to send to his five Brethren to forwarn them, lest they also come into the same place of Torments.

Before whilst he was in this World, and fared deliciously every day, he had a great Retinue, a great Company of Attendants about him, Friends and Servants at his command, happy he, who could be at his beck and run at his appointment. But what is the end of this Pomp and Grandeur, we read in the following Verses; that the Rich Man died, and became destitute and forsaken of all his former Attendants; and there-

therefore he was fain to cry unto *Abraham*, and himself deliver his own Message. Before he had a numerous train of Servants about him; he could then say to them, Run and speak to this great Person, run and speak to that; but now he has not a Servant at command, not one to send to *Abraham*, he is forc'd to speak and cry himself; *He* cried, and said, *Father Abraham*, do you send unto my Brethren, (he is forc'd now to borrow a Messenger; do you send, &c.) lest they come into these Torments.

Where now are his Parasites and Flatterers, his Guests that daily feasted and made merry with him at his Table? Where are his five Brethren now to divert him in his Sorrows, not one of all these near him, he's left alone; no Companion besides his Sins, the bitter remembrance of his false Pleasures, and his grim and frightful Executioners and Tormenters, the Devil and his Angels.

In this lamentable Example of this once great and prosperous, but now wretched Man, we may see how sad a thing it is, not to be convinc'd of the Vanity of the World, till 'tis experienc'd in the Flames of Hell.

And therefore the Sacred Writers, both of the Old and New Testament, insist much upon this Subject, putting us in mind of the instability of earthly Things, and instructing us to live above them.

The Prophet *Esaï* proclaims all Flesh to be but Grass, *Chap. 40. 6.* *Solomon* compares the Comforts of the World, to the crackling of Thorns under a Pot, *Ecclesj. 7. 6.* *St. Paul* tells us, That the Fashion of the World passeth away, *1 Cor. 7. 31.* What we translate *Fashion*, is in the Greek *χρῖμα*, and signifies a Figure, an Apparition, a Pageantry, that makes a little shew and is soon gone; and therefore he would not have us be too anxious or sollicitous for the World, but to use it with that indifferency and moderation as if we used it not.

And having himself this mean opinion and low esteem of the World, he tells us what was his behaviour and carriage towards it; *Gal. 6. 14. The World is crucified unto me*, says he, *and I unto the World.* Give me leave briefly to explain these Expressions: *The World is crucified unto me*: i. e. I bear as great a contempt and hatred to the World, as Men usually do to those notorious Villains who are crucified, and whom all good Men hate

hate and are ashamed of: or else thus; The World is as loathsome and ignominious a thing to me, as the execrable and noisome Carcase of a Malefactor hanging upon the Cross or Gibbet.

And then for those other words, *I am crucified unto the World*; they signify as much as if he had said. As a dead Man is not taken with, or sensible of the most flattering Objects; so all the most pleasant and beautiful things of the World cannot allure me, I am even as a crucified dead Man in regard of them, and take no notice of them, they are not able to tempt or move me: For when a Servant or a Slave is dead, we have no more power over him; he's gone into another World, and we can no longer command or force him to obey us as before. And therefore when St. Paul says, *I am crucified unto the World*, his meaning is, that now his Conversation is in Heaven, the World has as little dominion over him, as a Master has over his crucified departed Servant, who can no longer obey or do him service.

Let this in short suffice for the Exposition of this Scripture, *The World is crucified unto me, and I unto the World.*

And though the Vanity and Vexation which attends the best condition here, be in it self sufficient

cient to wean us from the World; yet certainly the Hope of Glory, and the Joys of Heaven, must much more stir up in us a religious disdain of all that flatters and allures us here: and therefore St. Paul gives the Reason why Believers do not concern or busy themselves for the World, *viz.* because they aimed at a Crown of Glory, *1 Cor. 9. 25.* The ambitious Men of the World, like those in the Olimpick Games, strive for a fading and corruptible; but we, says he, for an incorruptible Crown of Glory. And if the Greatness of this Crown, and the Comforts of it, are able to raise us above the World; St. Paul tells us, they are so great that they cannot be uttered, they are *unspeakable*, *2 Cor. 12. 4.*

Rhetorick uses to magnify Things, and by Hyperboles, to make them greater than they are; but the greatest Eloquence comes short in expressing the Glories of Heaven: when the Apostle endeavours to speak of them, he's struck with silence, *They are Things*, says he, *which cannot be uttered.* And, *2 Cor. 9.* he says, *It cannot enter into the Heart of Man, to conceive the Things which God has prepared for them that love him.* By the Heart in this place, are understood the Thoughts and the Desires.

1. As

1. As to the Thoughts; though the World be of an immense and vast greatness, yet the Thoughts, in one moment, can run over it all. Suppose ten thousand Worlds, yet we may imagine ten thousand more, and in an instant comprehend the Glories of them in our Thoughts: nothing can set bounds to our Thoughts and Imaginations; propose the greatest Riches, Pleasures, Honours, yet we can imagine greater still. And then,

2. As to our Desires; give all that is desirable in the World, yet we can wish for and desire far greater; nothing that is in this World can limit our Desires. Nevertheless, though the Thoughts, and Imaginations, and Desires of the Heart, be of so great power and extent, yet they can never comprehend the Glories of Heaven: for, says the Apostle, they have not, they cannot enter into the Heart; they are greater than we are able to imagine, they are larger than our Desires.

The Soul in this imperfect state of Flesh, is too weak to bear that exceeding weight of Glory that shines in Heaven in its full lustre. If God should let down but one ray of that Glory upon us now, it would not comfort and enlighten,

ten, but only dazle and astonish the Beholder : we must first be received into Heaven, before we can be qualified for the greatness of the Joys there.

And yet Men live so carelessly, so little mind or concern themselves for Heaven, as if the Blessings which God has promised to bestow upon us there, were not worth the enjoyment, not worth the looking after.

But true Believers, when they are tempted to desire, or to covet the Glories of this World, check those vain Motions, by arguing with themselves thus : The Glory we expect in Heaven, will out-shine all these ; we will not therefore neglect the Joys Above, for any thing that seems great or glorious here. 'Tis below us to think upon the World, this is a Subject for a Turk, or Barbarian, and such as know not Christ. A Believer has a nobler Theme for his Thoughts to work upon ; he's thinking of the Unity of the ever-glorious Trinity ; he's meditating upon the Privileges of Angels, who are admitted to stand about the Throne ; he's meditating upon the Spirits of Just Men made perfect, and that we also shall be like them.

This

This is a Subject fit for them who profess the Belief of another World, and do indeed look for the blessed Hope, and glorious Appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; as *St. Paul's* words are in *Titus* 2. 13.

I come now to the third general Head of my Text, and that is, The Time when we must set our selves against the World, exprest in the Present Tense, *Overcometh*: 'Tis not enough that we have once opposed the World, or do design it, but it must be our present constant endeavour, to compleat and maintain the Victory.

He is no true Souldier, who does but begin to prepare for the War, when the Trumpet is sounding the Retreat: And 'tis too late to arm our selves against the World, when the time of our Departure is at hand, and the Night come when no one can work; *When, as Solomon expresses it, the Keepers of the House shall tremble, and the strong Men shall bow themselves, Eccles. 12. 3.* when the vigorous Spirits shall be wasted, and nothing left but the dregs of Life; not strength enough to bear up under the Infirmities of decrepit Age; or to support us under the sad Reflections upon an ill-spent Life, under the hor-

rors of dying, and the fearful looking for of Judgment to come.

Can we imagine that the settled Conquest, and undisturb'd Dominion, which all our Life long the World has had over us, can be cast off and overthrown, with our faint last Breath, with a few sighs and groans upon our Death-bed? Which very sighs too, 'tis to be fear'd, proceed not so much from a real enmity to the World, as from a grief that we can no longer enjoy the Pleasures of it, and yield our selves its Servants as before.

And yet how are the thoughts of this great and necessary Victory laid aside to the very last Minutes, as if the pale, gashly, frightly looks of a dying Man, could in a moment daunt and put to flight our Spiritual Adversaries.

And therefore St. Paul puts us upon another course, in order to our Victory over the World; he advises us to arm our selves betimes, and to stand always upon our defence; *Ephes. 6. 13. Take unto you (says he) the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the Evil Day. In the Evil Day, (i.e.) in the dangerous and perillous time of our whole Life; because the World, all our Life long, continually assaults us*
with

with its Temptations, that we might become its Prey : therefore the Apostle gives us such a strict charge to arm our selves, and to be always prepared to oppose the World.

It must be our present Work and Business, we must not defer or put off this Victory over the World till we come to die : No! 'tis express in the Present Tense, that Faith overcomes the World now, and is always in Arms against it.

So that the design of the Apostle, in exhorting us to take to our selves the whole Armour of God, is to instruct us, that we should be always prepared, and in continual readiness to resist the World : and when we shall have put on the whole Armour of God, and done what we can to arm our selves against the World, lest we should despair of victory, our Saviour gives us encouragement from his own conquest over the World : John 16. 33. *Be of good cheer,* (says he) *I have overcome the World :* As if he had said, when I command ye to subdue the World, I put ye upon no more than what I have performed my self : And now the Conquest can't seem impossible or difficult to you, since I your Leader have shewn you the way ; I have already overcome the World, and left it to you but a main'd Enemy.

But besides all this ; if we do but implore Relief from Heaven, and pray unto the Lord of Hosts to aid our own Endeavours, and to help our Infirmities, he will give us the assistance of his mighty Spirit, and we shall be *more than Conquerors*, as *St. Paul* speaks *Rom. 8. 37.*

He says we shall be more than Conquerors ; *i. e.* we shall win a greater Victory, and more renown, than all the ambitious and vain-glorious Men of the World, though they subdue Kingdoms ; we shall merit more true applause, than do your hot, fiery, furious Spirits, and in plain terms, murderers of this Age, who upon the least Punctillio, and scarce discernable Point of Honour, (as they call it) pride themselves in stabbing, wounding, killing one another ; who forget their Baptismal Vow, of fighting under the Banners of Christ, the Prince of Peace and Love, and live as if they had solemnly been baptized into the bloody Service of the Devil, who is a murderer from the beginning : such as these are but poor unhappy Conquerors, and triumph only in their own slavery, and subjection to their unruly Passions.

So that true Believers, who overcome the World, if compared to these, may well be stiled
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more than Conquerors ; their Victory is of a higher nature ; they bear about with them in their Bodies, not the Wounds and Marks of their injured and provoked Brother, but the Marks of the Lord Jesus ; their boasting is, that they have lost a right Hand, and a right Eye, in the Service of Christ ; that they have overcome the Pride of the World by their Humility ; its Luxury, by their Temperance and Sobriety ; its Covetousness, by their Liberality ; its Malice, Hatred, and Revenge, by their Charity and brotherly Love.

Such a Victory as this, will make us more than Conquerors, as the Apostle's words are ; and will be rewarded with Peace of Conscience through the whole course of Life, with Comfort in the hour of Death, and with eternal Rest in Heaven.

I come now to a Conclusion, by making some Reflections upon the Particulars of my Text.

I have put you in mind, that the true Christian Faith, is not a bare Notional or Speculative, but an Active, Practical Faith, implied in this word *Victory*, &c.

y. That

1. That this Faith overcomes the World two ways.
 1. By patiently suffering its Adversity.
 2. By resisting its Prosperity.

III. I have spoken concerning the Time when we must set our selves against the World, and that is express in the Present Tense, *Overcometh*, it must be our present constant endeavour to oppose the World.

And now, if our Faith must be Practical and Active, what remains, but to frame our Lives answerable to our Faith; seriously considering what it is we say when we rehearse the Articles of our Creed: Do we not then solemnly profess, that we believe there is a God who made us, who sent his Son into the World to redeem us, and at last to be our Judg; from whose Tribunal we must go to the place, either of everlasting Happinels, or endless Misery.

And if we really believe all this, *What manner of Persons ought we to be, in all holy Conversation and Godliness, looking for, and hastning to the coming of the Day of God?* 2 Pet. 3. 11.

St. John tells us, in 1 Epist. 3. 2. that *when Christ shall appear, we shall be like him*: but then he

he adds, *Vers. 3.* that every one who has this Hope in him, to be like God, purifies himself, even as he is pure : He must keep himself from the pollutions of the World, and from all filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit.

Suppose it were possible for us to draw aside this Veil of Flesh, and take a view of the worldlings Soul now, as 'tis daily mudling up and down the World, hugging (as it were) each piece of Dunghil, saluting every fulsom Object, rowling it self in the Dirt and Mire, Can we imagine such a Soul as this in the least fit for Heaven, where nothing enters in that defiles ; fit to associate with those clean Inhabitants above, and to stand in the presence of an holy God ? No ! St. James tells us, That pure Religion, and undefiled, which must render us acceptable to God, is to keep our selves unspotted from the World.

And to this end, that we may overcome the World, and live above it, I advise unto frequent Meditations upon our Divine Original ; that we are descended of the Father of Spirits ; that we are of the same Family with Angels and Arch-Angels, related to the Cherubims, and near allied to the Eternal King : And shall we now degenerate, and so live, as if we had no Relations,

ons, no Alliance, but, as *Job* speaks, *Corruption for our Father, and the Worm for our Mother, and for our Brother?*

So that if we do believe and expect an *Inheritance incorruptible, that fadeth not away, an House not made with Hands eternal in the Heavens*; let us set our *Affections upon those Things Above, and not on Things on the Earth*; let our *Conversation be in Heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour*: and then the same *Jesus, who is now the Author of our Faith, will be the Rewarder of it.*

Which Rewards, God for his own Mercies, and for his Son's sake, be pleased to bestow upon us all. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

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